



Thrasher Lake Fisheries Management Report 2004



Thrasher Lake is a 36-acre impoundment located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Amherst County. This is one of three public reservoirs owned by the County and offers a scenic view of the mountains while providing opportunities for fishing and family outings. The various facilities include picnic tables, restroom, play area, boat ramp, and associated parking. The lake is open year round but nighttime activities are prohibited except for fishing. Anglers are required to obtain a permit from the county to fish at night. Boats propelled by oar or electric motor are welcome but outboard motor use is prohibited.

This reservoir was first opened to fishing in 1981 and largemouth bass were protected with a 14-inch minimum size limit. The size limit was removed in 1983 to reduce the numbers of abundant slow growing bass. A 12-15 inch protective slot limit was initiated in 1990 to protect some of the larger bass while allowing harvest of some small and large fish.

Sampling prior to 1990 indicated the bass population had never reached it's potential. In 1991, less than two years after the protective slot was initiated, largemouth bass in the smaller and larger size groups increased. The 2000 sample showed this reservoir had a very good bass population with good numbers of bass in and above the protective slot limit. In 2003, the bass population was again starting to show signs of being bass crowded with a large increase in the number of small bass and a reduction of large bass. Management during the next couple of years will concentrate on keeping bass numbers balanced.

The panfish population is primarily bluegill with only a few redear sunfish and black crappie available. The bluegill population is in good condition but is starting to decline in numbers from excessive largemouth bass predation. A fair number of black crappie were collected for the first time in 2000 but all of those crappie were 7-12 inches in length. With very little crappie reproduction in recent years, there are not many crappie currently available to anglers. This type of cyclic reproductive success in crappie populations is typical in small reservoirs. Crappie anglers should not expect good crappie fishing at Thrasher Lake for at least several years.

Channel catfish were stocked in 1978-1999 but only one catfish has been ever been collected. The channel catfish stocking program at Thrasher Lake was discontinued since stocked catfish contributed very little to the fishery.

The current regulations had been effective in maintaining a balanced fish population until 2003. If a reduction in the bass population is not successful in the next couple of years, this regulation may need to be modified.

To access this reservoir, turn northeast on Rt. 610 from Rt. 60 (approximately 9 miles west of Amherst), then turn left on Rt. 617, and the lake access road will be the first road on the left. Permits for night fishing are available through Amherst County at 434-946-9371.

Thrasher Lake Key Findings - 2003

- The 2003 electrofishing survey indicated a change in the fish populations since 2000. The largemouth bass population has dramatically increased while the sunfish and crappie populations have decreased.
- Largemouth bass numbers more than doubled to 484 fish per hour in 2003. PSD and RSD indices for bass have dropped dramatically since 2000.
- If the largemouth bass population in 2004 is similar to 2003, a reduction in the bass population will be needed to maintain a balanced fishery. A reduction in bass numbers could be accomplished by a regulation change or by manually thinning the bass population with electrofishing gear. It is recommended that trying to thin the population manually with electrofishing be utilized first. This would maintain the similar regulations as nearby Stonehouse Lake and keep regulations less confusing to anglers.
- Only four black crappie were collected in 2003. The decline in black crappie numbers is likely due to poor reproduction in recent years. All black crappie collected in 2000 were adult fish indicating cyclic reproductive success. An increasing bass population may also be keeping crappie numbers suppressed.
- Catch rates for bluegill also declined but PSD and RSD indices increased since 2000. This is another indication that the bass population may need adjusting.
- Channel catfish stocking was discontinued after 2000 due to poor contribution of channel catfish to the fishery.

Management Recommendations

- The largemouth bass population should be checked again in 2004. If the population still appears to be unbalanced, DGIF should remove a portion of the smaller largemouth bass to reduce crowding and improve the largemouth bass size structure.

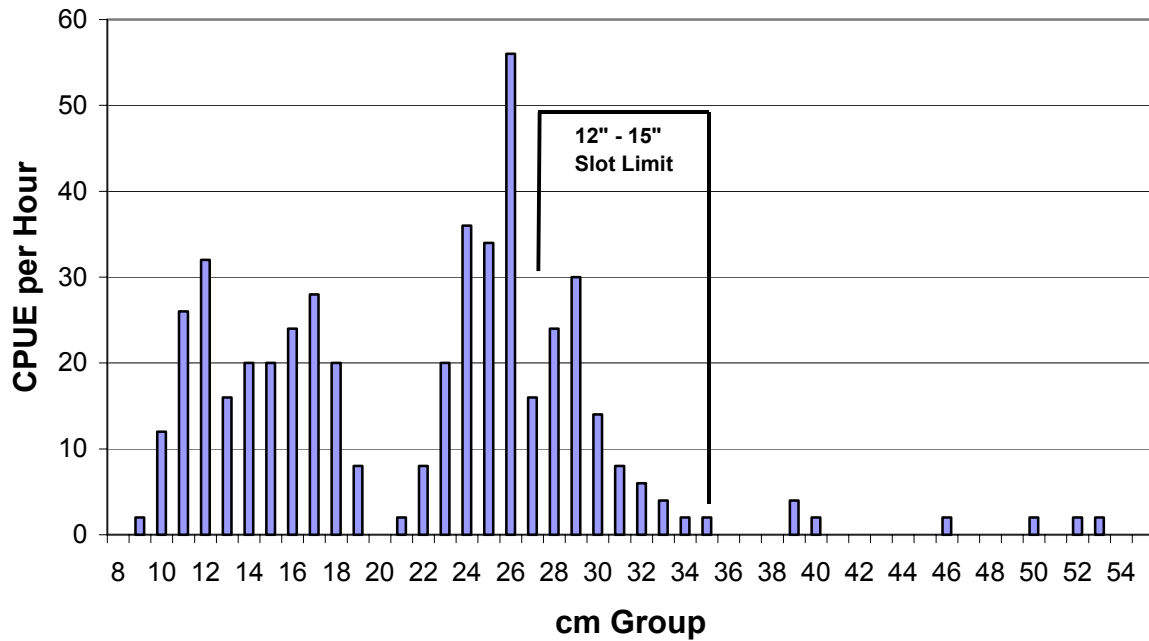


Figure 1. Length frequency distribution for largemouth bass collected with electrofishing gear from Thrasher Lake on 4-28-2003.

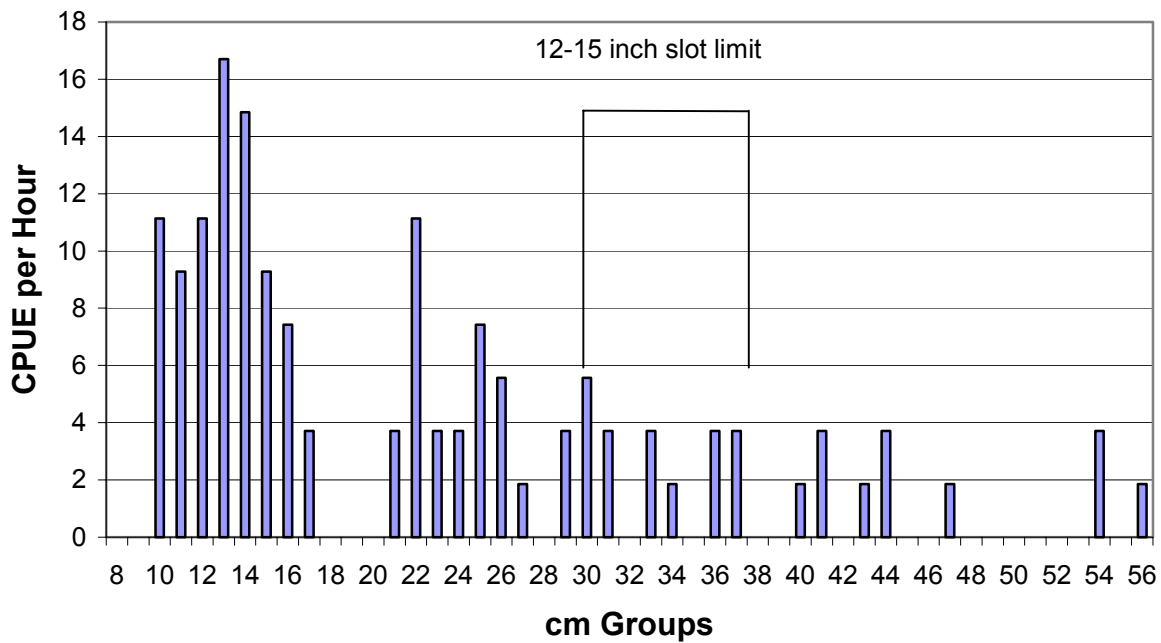


Figure 2. Length frequency distribution for largemouth bass collected with electrofishing gear from Thrasher Lake on 4-24-2000.

Table 1. Electrofishing CPUE (hr) data and proportional and relative stock indices collected from Thrasher Lake from 1991 - 2003.

Species	Year	N	CPUE	Young	Stock	Quality	Preferred	PSD	RSD
LMB				(0-19)	(20-29)	(30-37)	(>37)		
	2003	242	484	100	102	30	10	28	5
	2000	89	165	45	22	12	10	50	23
	1991	127	199	94	25	8	0	24	0
BLC				(0-12)	(13-19)	(20-24)	(>24)		
	2003	4	8	1	0	0	3	100	100
	2000	41	76	0	0	25	16	100	39
	1991	2	3	2	0	0	0	-	-
BLG				(0-7)	(8-14)	(15-19)	(>19)		
	2003	108	216	24	45	26	13	46	15
	2000	210	390	9	123	68	10	39	5
	1991	72	-	36	27	1	8	25	22